

FOLLOWING ON THE FLORIDA DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEAD REPORT

S.T.E.P.

INTO FLORIDA'S FUTURE

STRATEGY & TACTICS FOR ELECTING PROGRESSIVES

Democratic
Progressive
Caucus
OF FLORIDA



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
FIELD AND TURNOUT	4
PARTY OPERATIONS AND STRUCTURE	8
EMPOWERING DECS, CLUBS & CAUCUSES	12
CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING	14
MESSAGING	20
DIGITAL MEDIA AND NEW TECHNOLOGY	22
CONCLUSION	24

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INTRODUCTION

Committed To Win

Through the **Leadership Expansion to Advance Democrats (LEAD) Task Force**, the Florida Democratic Party (FDP) signaled that it is serious about examining shortfalls and correcting course in order to win back Florida. State Democrats are ignited by the challenge and have taken up the call for change. **The Strategies and Tactics for Electing Progressives, or STEP Report** is offered as a plan for implementing that change.

- As we developed this report, one theme became prominent across all of our discussions: *We must be committed to the long game*. It took years for Democrats to lose so much ground in Florida. It will take time to climb back on top.

The premise of the STEP Report is that we must re-think our philosophy, prioritize our resources, and align our activity around the long game.

Without this perspective, it would be easy to write off some STEP recommendations by saying, “We just don’t have the money, it’s not practical.” On the contrary, the STEP recommendations will better leverage our resources by building capacity for greater fundraising power and a stronger grassroots infrastructure.

The strategies and tactics described in this report are based on:

- Shifting budget priorities to those which strengthen the ability of the FDP to empower, mobilize, and grow the field.
- Strategically building a bench of candidates aimed for out-year races as well as current cycles. Mentoring candidates in order to develop their capacity to succeed as candidates and leaders.
- Refusing to accept midterm dropoff as a given. Capitalizing on this cycle’s populist momentum to sustain future voter engagement.
- Adapting to an evolving media landscape with a broader, coordinated network of messengers. Making the party bigger and better by cultivating a relationship between the FDP and a field network in order to amplify the Democratic voice across the state.

The Democratic Progressive Caucus welcomes dialogue and collaboration with DEC’s, Clubs, and Caucuses and the FDP in order to move the STEP recommendations forward. *We are committed to win.*

We must dramatically improve our commitment to field efforts and deliver votes for our candidates and our values.

These efforts must reach beyond the lowest hanging fruit, to denying the opposition the opportunity to expand margins in uncontested regions.

FIELD + TURNOUT

Winning elections is a core function of the Florida Democratic Party.

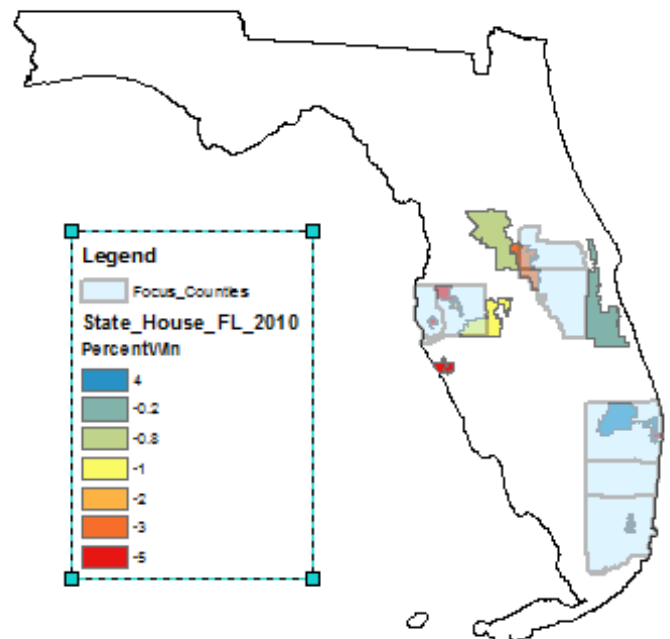
As such, we must dramatically improve our commitment to field efforts that deliver votes for our candidates and our values. These efforts must reach beyond the lowest hanging fruit, denying the opposition the opportunity to expand margins in uncontested regions.

In 2014, the field and turnout program run by the Florida Democratic Party, legislative campaigns, and the gubernatorial campaigns included:

- 150 field staff
- 40 offices
- 7 targeted counties (Pinellas, Hillsborough, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade)

Where these field efforts were present, Democratic performance measurably improved over 2010. Where these efforts were absent, in Central and North Florida, we suffered large declines of over 100,000 votes.

overview



FIELD + TURNOUT [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASE TARGETS TO INCLUDE RURAL AND NON-URBAN COUNTIES

– Alachua, Gadsden, Jefferson and Leon

ALACHUA 2010 Electoral District Votes 44,570 • Early Votes 16,549 • Vote by Mail 13,567

RICK SCOTT	28,129	37.92%
ALEX SINK	43,933	59.22%

ALACHUA 2014 Electoral District Votes 41,973 • Early Votes 17,983 • Vote by Mail 19,091

RICK SCOTT	31,097	39.66%
CHARLIE CRIST	44,052	56.18%

GADSDEN 2010 Electoral District Votes 10,044 • Early Votes 4,597 • Vote by Mail 2,136

RICK SCOTT	4,324	36.90%
ALEX SINK	12,067	60.99%

GADSDEN 2014 Electoral District Votes 9,099 • Early Votes 5,162 • Vote by Mail 3,533

RICK SCOTT	4,798	27.25%
CHARLIE CRIST	12,425	70.56%

JEFFERSON 2010 Electoral District Votes 3,773 • Early Votes 1,673 • Vote by Mail 828

RICK SCOTT	2,455	39.37%
ALEX SINK	3,606	57.83%

JEFFERSON 2014 Electoral District Votes 3,550 • Early Votes 1,587 • Vote by Mail 1,192

RICK SCOTT	2,840	44.70%
CHARLIE CRIST	3,291	51.79%

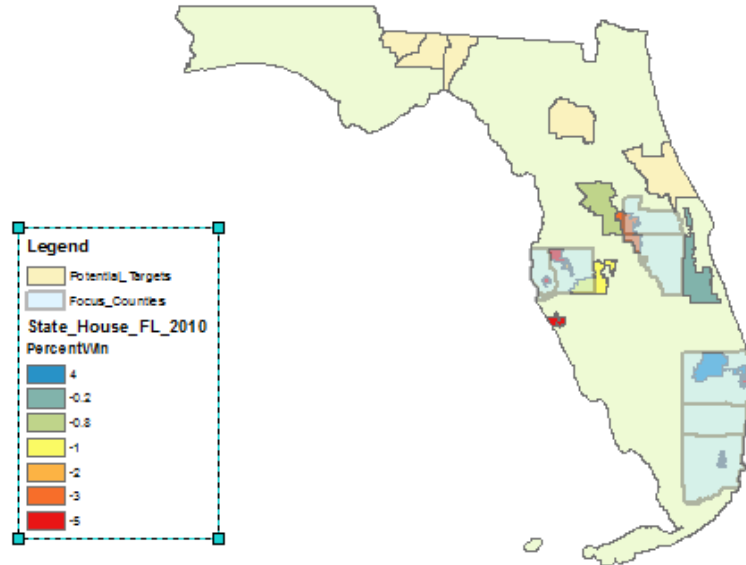
LEON 2010 Electoral District Votes 63,435 • Early Votes 18,594 • Vote by Mail 18,412

RICK SCOTT	18,814	31.34%
ALEX SINK	42,660	66.50%

LEON 2014 Electoral District Votes 58,289 • Early Votes 27,885 • Vote by Mail 22,939

RICK SCOTT	20,442	35.31%
CHARLIE CRIST	35,346	61.54%

FIELD + TURNOUT [CONT.]



RECOMMENDATIONS

INCLUDE A NORTHEAST COUNTY IN TARGETING

FDP should include a Northeast Florida county such as Volusia or Duval in its targeting. Although their Democratic Performance Index (DPI) is in the mid to low 40s there are opportunities to increase turnout through Early Voting or Vote By Mail programs, while building party support and infrastructure in the process.

VOLUSIA 2010 Electoral District Votes 98,368 • Early Votes 29,520 • Vote by Mail 32,621

RICK SCOTT	77,039	48.79%
ALEX SINK	73,765	46.72%

VOLUSIA 2014 Electoral District Votes 88,743 • Early Votes 33,259 • Vote by Mail 56,719

RICK SCOTT	85,749	48.62%
CHARLIE CRIST	79,315	44.97%

DUVAL 2010 Electoral District Votes 160,334 • Early Votes 52,279 • Vote by Mail 48,260

RICK SCOTT	135,074	51.46%
ALEX SINK	120,097	45.75%

DUVAL 2014 Electoral District Votes 143,441 • Early Votes 73,604 • Vote by Mail 55,759

RICK SCOTT	146,407	54.08%
CHARLIE CRIST	112,026	41.38%

FIELD + TURNOUT [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **EARLY VOTE (EV) PROGRAMS HAVE SHOWN PROMISE IN MUNICIPAL RACES:** As with Vote by Mail (VBM) programs, EV programs can increase turnout and bank votes before Election Day (ED). These programs can be utilized in targeted and non-targeted areas. The FDP should work with local party organizations to design and deploy Early Vote programs throughout the state.
- **DESIGN A TOOLBOX FOR NON-TARGETED RACES** and counties that would allow them access to campaign-related programs such as VBM and EV: Provide resources such as sample campaign plans, VAN access to campaigns, NCEC data and budget/fundraising documents. Provide vendor information to these groups as well. Dedicate two staff members as the point persons for these counties/races.
- **INCREASE TRAINING PROGRAMS:** This could be done in partnership with other organizations that provide training and could be customized to fit the needs of the group. Training is critical for staff, volunteers, and activists. This would also empower non-targeted counties/races to run viable campaigns. These trainings should be conducted regionally in all areas of the state.
- **DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE COORDINATED CAMPAIGN MATERIALS FOR COUNTY PARTIES.**
- **PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY FOR DECISION-MAKING** process in FDP's decisions on targeting counties/races plans and programs. Provide field office information and allow non-targeted counties/races access to these offices and their resources if possible.
- **TARGETED COUNTIES SHOULD CONTRIBUTE** to the cost of their campaigns.
- **"TARGETED" SHOULDN'T MEAN ALL THE RESOURCES** and non-targeted shouldn't mean none of the resources: We should strive to run quality campaigns everywhere, while weighting resources where they can deliver the best outcomes.
- **MOVE THE FDP OFFICE** from Tallahassee to a more central location such as Tampa or Orlando to be more connected and engaged with voter turnout efforts throughout the state.
- **WHEN FUNDS ARE SHORT, GRASSROOTS VOLUNTEERS MUST PICK UP THE SLACK.** Candidates who can motivate and inspire are critical to a successful grassroots effort.

Instead of focusing all efforts on winning the money race against Republicans, the FDP should work aggressively to change the playing field by reordering priorities and redeploying resources.

PARTY OPERATIONS + STRUCTURE

Building on the LEAD Task Force’s recommendations for changing party operations and structure,

we must start by recognizing that the Florida Democratic Party should reorganize in order to build more grassroots power. While Democrats will not win the money race in the foreseeable future, strategies must be adopted to make Democratic activists more competitive. Priorities need to be reordered and resources redeployed so that instead of focusing all efforts on winning the money race against Republicans, the FDP aggressively works to change the playing field.

overview

The state party has to take an active role in making local Democratic Executive Committees (DECs) more effective. Clubs, caucuses, and DECs need access to best practices and toolkits in order to have a greater impact. Cooperation and coordination is only possible when information is accessible. In order to become more efficient and effective, Democratic organizations must receive more support from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the FDP. The Florida Republican Party campaign structure is expensive and depends heavily on paid labor. By making more resources and information available to Democratic volunteer activists on the ground, our candidates will be better positioned to compete. This will save both DECs and candidates time, money, and effort as well as increasing the Democratic competitive advantage by growing political power.

The party must also become more geographically centered. Shifting from an isolated Tallahassee-based operational model to a regionally-structured party operation would decentralize decision-making and enhance the party’s effectiveness in organizing for local races and issue campaigns. Overall, the state party needs to shift focus to regional and individual DEC structures, distributing power and information more equitably around the state. While a presence is needed in Tallahassee around the legislature, shifting operations would allow an increase in fundraising, trainings, and coordination.

In order for these things to happen, party governance bylaws need to be examined and rewritten, a professional staff must be trained and empowered, and the party must shift priorities away from winning a limited number of elections in the short-term and refocus on building long-term grassroots capacity.

PARTY OPERATIONS + STRUCTURE [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATION REFORM AND STREAMLINE PARTY GOVERNANCE --
REWRITE PARTY BYLAWS TO EXPAND AND SHIFT THE BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN
THE FDP'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE; AND TO INVEST RANK-AND-FILE DEMOCRATS IN
PARTY GOVERNANCE

- Modify the weighted vote by adding more members to carry it (more than one committee man and woman for large counties).

RECOMMENDATION DECENTRALIZE PARTY POWER AWAY FROM TALLAHASSEE

- Move party headquarters to the I-4 corridor.
- Set up regional offices that can be used for full-time, year-round field work, fundraising, and coordination.
- Hire a professional director for each regional office with duties to include outreach, voter registration, and permanent field presence.
- Organize and coordinate high-quality regional trainings at the state level to guarantee access in every county.

PARTY OPERATIONS + STRUCTURE [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATION SHIFT FOCUS AWAY FROM WINNING A LIMITED NUMBER OF ELECTIONS IN THE SHORT TERM AND REFOCUS ON BUILDING LONG-TERM GRASSROOTS CAPACITY

- Set up a separate in-house fundraising arm to raise money strictly for infrastructure building.
- Subsidize/hire and train dedicated county staff, if possible.
- Create toolkits/training kits for Democratic Executive Committees (DECs), clubs, caucuses and candidates (operations/administrative manual for leaders, committee person and precinct training manual, candidate manual on running for office, elections manual, fundraising toolkit, shared best practices, messaging guidelines, voter registration manual, etc.).
- Work with party organizations to set goals and timelines, provide essential resources to reward their achievements through non-monetary means (ex. certificates, priority seating at FDP events, etc.).
- Provide professional training for DECs, clubs, caucuses, and candidates.
- Develop an extensive candidate training program.

RECOMMENDATION BUILD AND EXERCISE POWER AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BY ENCOURAGING DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE (DNC) MEMBERS TO STRATEGIZE WITH LEADERS FROM OTHER STATES IN ORDER TO GET BETTER SUPPORT FOR STATE PARTIES

- Call for a renewal of the 50 State Strategy.
- Build and fund a team of nationally known advocates who can travel to the states to speak on Democratic issues.
- Bring top-tier speakers to Florida for statewide events.
- Provide a positive message built on progressive values that will unify Democrats during every election cycle.
- Implement performance-based measures when hiring/retaining political consultants.
- Provide materials that state parties can pass along (ex. DNC Neighbor-to-Neighbor program from 50 State Strategy).

PARTY OPERATIONS + STRUCTURE [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATION EXPAND AND PROFESSIONALIZE PARTY STAFF

- Hire adequate staff with diverse experience fully dedicated to support the training and development of DEC's, clubs, caucuses and candidates.
- Build an effective communications network between the FDP and local organizations and candidates.
- Coordinate and share party resources.
- Organize high-quality regional trainings in Votebuilder, online platforms, social media, field organizing, press relations, etc.
- Prepare materials (operations/administrative manual for leaders, committee person and precinct training manual, candidate manual on running for office, elections manual, fundraising toolkit, shared best practices, messaging guidelines, voter registration manual, etc.)
- Hire a dedicated meeting planner for statewide events.
- Hire experienced communications staff who have the ability to get better press coverage for the party.
- Hire party affairs director to oversee DEC's, clubs, and caucuses.
- Increase salaries and improve quality of management to prevent staff turnover.
- Hire an information director to build and maintain up-to-date databases for better communications.
- Utilize cloud services on a statewide basis to manage databases in order to improve communication.
- Manage distribution of candidate resources (as discussed in Candidate Recruitment section).

Activists and volunteers provided with essential resources will deliver returns significantly greater returns.

EMPOWERING DECs, CLUBS + CAUCUSES

Building power from the community up means empowering through bidirectional engagement.

The FDP should seek to support and facilitate the growth and improvement of our DECs, Clubs, and Caucuses. If provided with essential resources and guidance, the leaders, activists, and volunteers in our communities will deliver returns significantly greater than costs.

overview

Clubs and Caucuses provide an infrastructure for significant core Democratic constituencies to communicate and organize; greater communication between those groups and the FDP would improve the state party's ability to reflect the values of their members.

Clubs, Caucuses, and DECs are the gateways to growing our party membership. To deliver that growth, the processes and rules should be made more accessible and understandable, facilitating trust in the system. Trainings and manuals should be available detailing the processes to become (and maintain) a certified Caucus or Club, and the FDP staff should support groups trying to join the party.

EMPOWERING DECs, CLUBS + CAUCUSES [CONT.]

RECOMMENDATIONS

CERTIFIED CLUBS AND CAUCUSES SHOULD

- Be utilized as advisors and included in planning processes of the FDP.
- Be included in the planning and execution of outreach, advocacy, and turnout efforts.
- Have access to VAN and trainings thereof.
- Be recognized for their contributions.
- Be included in representation on committees.
- Have regular communication with the FDP Chair, with additional teleconferences prior to major events.
- Be included in the FDP digital presence (links on website, social media).
- Through an FDP information officer, contact information of DECs, Clubs, and Caucuses should be maintained.
- Be required to include a strategic plan in their application, updated regularly.

TO EMPOWER THESE GROUPS, THE FDP SHOULD

- Provide training and resources to assist Clubs, Caucuses, and DECs with running better meetings, recruiting quality speakers, and engaging wider audiences.
- Utilize regional staffing to support Democratic organizations throughout the state.
- Work with Clubs, Caucuses, and DECs on goal setting and incentive opportunities; this should include direct communication with FDP staff (data director, communications director) and access to pertinent data.
- Assist and facilitate the process of creating effective strategic plans, and shall use their own as a template.
- Restore the role of party affairs director or redistribute those responsibilities to appropriate staff.
- Work to increase communication between the FDP and Clubs, Caucuses, and DECs, and the accessibility of information.
- Create online feedback forms.

Recent favorable redistricting court decisions are providing new opportunities for gains, now, and in the future.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH

There is widespread agreement that after decades “in the wilderness,” Florida Democrats lack a deep enough bench across the board, so any discussion of candidate

recruitment at this juncture is really about building a

bench around the state. Recent favorable court decisions arising out of challenges to the maps from the 2011 redistricting will provide new opportunities for gains, now, and in the future.

overview

The LEAD Task Force report provides three crucial action items: creating of regional recruitment councils, establishing municipal victory committee to support local and county elections, and applying transparency to the evaluation of candidates.

The missing element: COMMUNITY DRIVEN

To have success recruiting and empowering candidates, we need local, county, and regional stakeholders to lead with the support of FDP staff and resources.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH [CONT.]

CREATE REGIONAL RECRUITMENT COUNCILS

FORMATION AND COMPOSITION

ESTABLISH PROCESS FOR CREATION OF COUNCILS AND MEMBERSHIP:

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

KEY QUESTIONS: Ideal number of members? Who appoints? Term of office? Reappointment permitted? Meeting schedule/frequency?

WHAT TYPE OF MEMBERS AND EXPERTISE WOULD PROVIDE BEST RESULTS? WHAT GROUPS AND CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD BE REPRESENTED?

- Representation from each County in the defined region.
- Active DEC's in region should be represented – County Chairs and/or Campaign committee chairs who possess the skill sets for this task may be a good choice.
- Respected elected or former elected Democrats in the region who demonstrate an aptitude and willingness to mentor candidates.
- Stakeholder representatives such as regular donors to Democratic candidates and organizations.
- Democrats who are community leaders in a capacity other than public office.
- Council members should ideally have a wide circle of acquaintances to tap for candidate recommendations.
- The council membership should include leaders in key Democratic constituency groups such as labor, women, LGBT, African-American, Latino.
- The council should reflect diversity in gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH [CONT.]

CREATE REGIONAL RECRUITMENT COUNCILS

FIRST STEPS—GETTING ORGANIZED

- Identify and map out public offices at all levels that would be viable pickup opportunities—no office is too low to provide experience to new young leaders.
- Track status of term limits, expected retirements, and similar opportunities.
- Prioritize seats to target, but remain flexible and open to candidates discovered who may be a better fit for another office.
- Develop/Approve an application template for aspiring candidates, ideally a form that can be used statewide with input from the FDP, House/Senate Victory, and Municipal Victory.
- Identify groups operating in the region that may be grooming new young Democratic leaders as sources for candidates to recruit and a model for future FDP grooming and trainings.
- Identify desirable attributes, capacities, and mentorship opportunities for potential candidates.

NEXT STEPS—DEVELOPING A POOL OF PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES

- Create a broad, wide-ranging list of prospects suggested by members of the Council.
- Put out a call for candidates. Anyone who's ever thought about it, prior office holders who may be considering a return to public service, past candidates, party leaders, etc.
- Work with DEC's in region so each has a "Thinking About Being a Candidate?" link on their websites and their social media pages.
- Informational landing page to include information about regional council and DEC Representative with contact information.
- Preliminary application/expression of interest forms.
- Arrange as many information sessions/receptions as needed to interact with prospects.
- Include current Democratic office holders who can share experiences.
- Explain goals to attendees: long term, medium term and short term.
- Set expectations, e.g., better to start at a lower level office and move up.
- Take applications at those sessions and follow up with attendees.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH [CONT.]

ASSESS, PLAN, COMMUNICATE

- Assess applicant skill levels, potential to fundraise, name recognition, extent of circle of influence, negatives, etc. and attach written summary assessments to applications.
- Begin the matching process of applicants with public offices.
- Regional Council's assessment and action plan/expectation of potential candidate.
- Meetings with applicants to get buy-in and plan candidacies.
- Working with FDP and House/Senate/Municipal Victory where appropriate.
- Report progress on a regular basis.
- Create effective communications structures whereby Regional Councils and FDP/House/Senate/Municipal Victory stay connected.

[LOCAL GOVERNMENT VICTORY FUND]

- Central hub of data, best practices in similar races, and resource management for all targeted Municipal and County races.
- Funding for winning municipal and county races targeted by the Party for, e.g., mailings, phone banks, robo-calls, etc.
- Targeting and candidate capacity considerations should follow similar processes as House/Senate Victory.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH [CONT.]

CANDIDATE AND CAMPAIGN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FOR CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

- Regional Trainings for candidates—initially may mean bringing in like-minded organizations that specialize in such trainings.
- “Job Fairs” to connect/introduce candidates to campaign support and consultants, and key vendors like Mail and communication houses, Photographers, and Union Printers.
- Funding to develop and train cadre of Florida-based campaign staffers through regional and statewide trainings.

VOTER FILE (VAN) ACCESS

- The FDP should facilitate ensuring Democratic candidate campaigns have access to the VAN, and the skills necessary to ensure data quality is maintained for future benefit.
- State Legislative Candidates will work with House or Senate Victory for access.
- The same terms and conditions should apply to all primary candidates.
- General Election candidates should be provided access at no charge if at all possible.
- County and Municipal Candidates, where appropriate expertise is available at the DEC level, should work with DEC's if at all possible.
- Develop guidelines and cost structure for various levels of local candidacies.
- Where applicable, develop task/cost-sharing structure between DEC's and FDP.
- FDP creates VAN account with firewall for candidate.
- DEC assists candidate with use of VAN.
- The same terms and conditions for access should apply to all candidates.

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT + BUILDING THE BENCH [CONT.]

CANDIDATE SUPPORT IN STATE LEGISLATIVE RACES

- Targeting decisions are made by House and Senate Victory political staff in consultation with Democratic House and Senate leaders and FDP executive staff.
- Targeting legislative races to the extent reasonably possible should be based on open and transparent criteria with the understanding that the campaign playing field is never static and unexpected challenges to Democratic candidates may arise and need to be addressed.
- Targeting decisions should include consideration of candidate capacity, near term competitiveness of the district, party and bench building, up and down ticket impacts, pressure on adjacent districts, and future opportunities.

CANDIDATE AND CAMPAIGN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- At various points in the process, general election candidates will be told which races are targeted and under what circumstances the targets will likely be reviewed and adjusted. Higher performance from campaigns should be matched when needed with an increased level of assistance from House and Senate Victory to the extent funds are available to do so. Conversely, failure to achieve fundraising goals, poor campaign management of funds raised, and poor execution of campaign functions like voter contact in the field and by phone may result in reduction in support from House and Senate Victory.
- Generally, candidates are expected to fund their own races. Fundraising requirements to run a credible campaign in a particular race and fundraising capability of a candidate should always be factored into determining the type of race a candidate should enter. The higher the level of the race, the greater the geographic area, and the greater the number of voters who need to be reached, the greater the proven fundraising ability of the prospective candidate must be.
- The process for selecting targeted legislative races should be as open as reasonably possible. They should include, but not necessarily be limited to, how the race fits into the long range plan for the state and region, Democratic voting strength for that district, candidate viability, name recognition, grassroots support for the race, grassroots appeal of the candidate, fundraising ability and resources of the candidate, and actual fundraising numbers for the candidate as the campaign proceeds.

A successful messaging platform to Floridians should encompass the broad range of experience of our voters — reflecting geographical specificity, racial, cultural, and social identities.

MESSAGING

Messaging should be responsive, targeted and delivered by well trained messengers. LEAD’s recommendations of distributing talking points, and expanding candidate messaging training are core objectives.

However, the “key narrative” identified in the LEAD Report, of economic issue messaging is *necessary but not sufficient* to cover the range of communication needs throughout Florida. Any one-size-fits-all approach is not sufficient in a state as large and diverse as Florida.

overview

Moreover, the “aspirational” message that targets a “middle class” is divisive and ignores those voters who don’t see themselves in this income bracket: students, working families, unemployed, and many seniors. This “work hard and play by the rules” message played well to Democrats in the 90s, but the economic message resonating with voters 30 years later is, *“working Americans need help now.”* It’s a message of urgency and it’s one that voters are listening for. Both Presidential frontrunners have moved to this messaging frame.

The “middle class” narrative also fails to address racial and social justice themes. A successful messaging platform to Floridians should encompass the broad range of experience of our voters — reflecting geographical specificity, racial, cultural, and social identities.

During the course of a campaign cycle, candidates, campaigns and county chairs will be called upon to speak to many issues in addition to the economy. Let’s equip ourselves for that certainty, in order that we may meet the challenge head-on, rather than pivot weakly back to the economy, when it’s not always the best course of action.

MESSAGING STRATEGY

- Develop messengers, targeted messages and messaging programming.
- Communications should be plan driven, with rapid response as a tactic within the plan, rather than a driver of the plan.
- Train DEC Chairs and Communication Chairs in FRAMING basics.
- Develop message sheets by ISSUE (environment, racial justice, etc. as per DNC web resources).
- Develop message sheets by IDENTITY (seniors, Hispanic, AA, etc. as per DNC web resources).
- Develop PROGRAMMING schedule for Early Voting and Local Voting earned media messaging.
- Earned media engagement calendar for election cycle (plug messages into existing milestone dates, exploit earned media opportunities).

MESSAGING TACTICS

- Distribute assets that counties can use “out of the box” and to build their own messages.
- Hotline for crisis communications and message counseling (email and phone).
- Hotline and workshops for targeted counseling — message targeting by county.
- Partnerships with community allies to maintain messaging channels/opportunities.
- Webinars and conference calls for message training at county level (chairs, communication chairs).
- Messaging TOOLKIT — templates, style guides, contacts, escalation guide (hotline info).

EARNED MEDIA

As a key component of the Communications plan, high quality earned media should be driving messaging in support of Democratic candidates, campaigns, and legislative battles.

- Every objective of the communications plan should include earned media efforts to engage communities to support the values and actions of Democrats across the state and year round.
- In cooperation with Political staff, the Communications staff should engage elected officials, community leaders, and other surrogates, providing them with assistance in placing both traditional and online content including OpEds, videos, and innovative social media actions.
- Earned media efforts should also be utilized as opportunities to build the bench and expand electoral opportunities.

EMAIL MARKETING + FUNDRAISING

Email outreach should be expanded beyond money asks and list building exercises to include quality message dissemination, surrogates, and community engagement.

- In cooperation with the Political and Finance departments, the Communications team should ensure that the email program is a consistent component of the communications plan.
- Use email program as a means to build the bench and supporting current and future candidates.
- Utilize surrogates to deliver messaging through email to increase engagement among targeted constituencies.
- Local and regional email blasts should be used to support campaigns, events, and hot issues around the state.

There is more than enough opportunity for dedicated digital staff, both to improve electoral performance and to improve communications between the party and DEC's, activists, and campaigns.

DIGITAL MEDIA + NEW TECHNOLOGY

Over the past two cycles, the FDP has made a strong investment in digital media and used digital media as the leading edge of a strong rapid response program. Aggressive utilization of social media platforms has at times shown significant positive results, it has also, at times, demonstrated immaturity, lack of focus, and inconsistency with communications across other platforms.

overview

All digital outreach efforts should be consistent with and an integrated component of a comprehensive communications plan. Platforms should be utilized to benefit other platforms, expanding effectiveness and delivering wider distribution of messaging. Results should be measured, compared to prior campaigns, and analyzed to deliver optimized performance in future efforts.

The implementation of full time digital staff showed some success in the 2014 cycle. It also raised questions as to what the responsibilities and focus of that staff are or should be. There is more than enough opportunity for dedicated digital staff both to improve electoral performance and to improve communications between the party and DEC's, activists, and campaigns.

The LEAD report includes a focused suggestion of using paid advertising to drive list growth. We support that recommendation, but further propose that comprehensive integration of a communications plan, with a higher quality mix of content, in combination with paid promotion, will drive more effective list growth. In cooperation with county DEC's, these efforts can be localized to increase community level support by connecting with voters on the issues of their neighborhoods.

DIGITAL MEDIA + NEW TECHNOLOGY [CONT.]

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- OVERHAUL OF FDP WEB SITE**
FDP website can be more user friendly, and information accessible.
- EASY EVENT REGISTRATION**
Big events such as Leadership Blue and the State Democratic Convention should have registration links directly available on the FDP web site. Daily schedule of events should be web and mobile-friendly for ease of use.
- STATEWIDE CALENDAR OF EVENTS**
Provide a tab directly on FDP website showing monthly DEC meeting by county, and additional major events, with cross-links to county's individual monthly event pages. This will drive memberships, and allow for visitors and new residents to find nearby DEC meetings.
- ENCOURAGE COUNTY DEC'S TO LINK BACK TO THE FDP WEB SITE.**
- CANDIDATE ATTITUDE AND ETIQUETTE**
All candidate behavior is subject to recording and digital sharing. This must be understood and lived by or disaster will strike.
- ANNUAL FOCUS GROUP**
Provide feedback on social media use/involvement, ease of website, communications from Party (content, amount), county involvement, etc.
- EMAIL MEMBERSHIP & FUNDRAISING GOAL**
Utilize monitoring thermometers on websites to drive email list growth and fundraising goals.

CONCLUSION

STEPping Forward

The work of the LEAD Task Force and the DPCF STEP contributors is not a finishing line, but a starting point.

That starting point is a place where we agree that we need to change how we reshape and build the Florida Democratic Party's infrastructure to better facilitate long term success.

The DPCF STEP Report has common suggestions across all six sections: more community driven, more empowerment, increased diversity of people and experiences, and more investment in long term capacity.

As the STEP Report demonstrates, there are numerous opportunities for improvement. The hard part is taking real action to capitalize on those opportunities. *To break free from what we've always done and how we've always thought, we need to want to change.* We need to work for that change. We need party leaders, activists, and elected officials, across the state from all of our communities to work together.

We need to STEP back from our own individual focus, and STEP towards a long term, statewide vision of success.

The Democratic Progressive Caucus of Florida thanks you for taking the time to read our report, and welcomes you to join us working to STEP forward into Florida's Future.

Join us online at www.progressivedemcaucusfl.org.